

## KVCC Church Council Meeting Minutes

May 24, 2022

**Present:** Pastor John Sampson, Debby Rice, Anne Runyon Hurd, Linda Bogardus, Charlotte Lichtenberg, Susie Allen, Barbara Merle-Smith, Liz Jaques, Derek Prill, Fritz Sabbow, Pam Gothner, Paul Osenbaugh, and Deborah Mitchell. **Absent:** Dre Roebuck, Nancy McArthur, Naj Wikoff, Jimm Collin, Henrietta Jordan, Lorraine Duvall and Erica Swift

Debby Rice opened the meeting at 5:07 PM and began the meeting by reading our Church's Open and Affirming Statement.

**Opening Prayer:** Pastor John led the group in prayer, inviting God's spirit to join us and give us inspiration.

**Reading of the Creation Justice Church Statement:** Debby read the CJC Statement to help keep us focused on our mission and the Church's commitments.

**Quorum:** We had a quorum at today's meeting.

**Approval of Last Month's Meeting:** Pam made a motion to approve the last month's meeting minutes, and Suzie seconded the motion. A discussion followed, and the motion was passed.

### PASTOR'S REPORT – MAY 24, 2022

#### Worship and Spiritual Development

- Upcoming special worship:
  - May 29 – Music Sunday
  - June 5 – Pentecost
  - June 12 – Will be attending the NY Conference Annual Meeting. Confirming a guest worship leader to fill in for me in my absence.
  - June 21 – Summer Equinox sunrise gathering
  - July 17 – Preach at All Souls; David Figliuzzi, an M.Div. student from Yale will be guest preaching.
  - July 31 - Celtic inspired worship
  - September 4 – Last Sunday worship before starting sabbatical
- Reinitiating weekly worship at the Neighborhood House on Thursday, June 2.
- Working with Nancy Emrich, Bill Serjak, and Liz Jaques to create the Summer Music program. Guest musicians have been confirmed for all Sundays. Working with Lynn D. to confirm guest accompanists for July and August.
- The CPG weekly book discussion group has taken a break from *The Cloud of Unknowing* for a couple of weeks. The group is focusing on online videos and Zoom meetings with meditation teachers from other traditions as a way to deepen and broaden our practice.
- Friday morning prayer group meets in the VSR, sharing prayers, concerns, and joys of the community.
- Weekly meetings with Dave Craig regarding worship on the Zoom platform. Chris Blaicher is training to be Dave's back-up.
- The Centering Prayer Group (CPG) meets mornings @ 7 AM.

### Confirmed Memorial Services and Weddings

- June 18 – Robinson wedding. John will not be officiating.
- October – Michael Caldwell and Patience Whitman.
- Working with Gretchen Willcox, Henri Jordan, and Emily Dwight to schedule dates for placing their memorial stones in the Memorial Garden.

### Pastoral Support

- Provide ongoing pastoral support to the church community via Zoom, telephone, in-person meetings, and email.

### Book Discussion Group – Tuesday Nights

- The group began reading *Living Buddha, Living Christ* by Thich Nhat Hanh on May 3.

### Community Support

- Working with members of the congregation on identifying neighbors in need, and supporting them through financial grants.

### Essex Association

- Annual meeting held on May 22.
- Black River – St. Lawrence Association (BRSL)
  - Members of the Essex Association continue to have discussions with the BRSL Association about merging. The discussions have been positive, and are moving forward.

### Training

- Sexual Harassment Prevention Training - Lynn to provide documentation that he received the training through KCS in September.

### Sabbatical

- Will be on sabbatical September 2022 – mid-January 2023
- Attending Michaelmas Term at Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK
- Sabbatical information session offered after worship on 5/13
- Requested that Council and Sabbatical Planning Committee identify all needs by March 31. Met with Larry S. to review the PDF process. Also requested to kick-off the 2023 Nomination process. No other request made at this time.

### Out of Office

- No time out of office planned at this time.

### Other Items

- Invited those interested in joining the church to reach out. Three people have indicated they would like to become members. New member welcome date TBD at this time.
- Created postcards to be sent to elected officials based on SNEC model. Cards were enthusiastically received by the congregation.
- Reserved table at Tri-Lakes PRIDE to be held in Saranac Lake on Sunday, June 26, 12 – 4 PM. Still need volunteers to help create the table and staff it.
- Purchased a new PRIDE flag, which includes colors for trans and people of color. Also purchased Safe Space stickers to put on church entry ways.

- Participating in monthly meetings of the Plattsburgh Climate Squad, a group comprised of members of houses of worship in Plattsburgh looking to become climate advocates in the North Country.
- Currently serving a 3-year term on the UCC NY Board of Directors.
- The Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ will convene at the Silver Bay Retreat Center, Silver Bay, NY, beginning at 2:00 PM on Friday, June 10, 2020, and will be in session until after the Closing Service of Worship on Sunday, June 12, 2022. Churches in the Essex Association will be called on to support the meeting.
- Member of the group planning the NY Conference Annual Meeting.
- Attend Spiritual Direction sessions for the development of my own spirit
- Became member of the Steering Committee of the Keene Diversity Advisory Committee (KDAC)

Pastor John would like to have the Pride flag flown for the month of June, and Derek will put up a pole. He would also like volunteers to help man a table at the Pride Parade in late June.

#### **Bazaar 2022 Report:**

No new information was provided at today's Council meeting.

#### **Treasurer's/ Finance Committee Report:**

Nancy provided the Council with a recent copy of the Profit and Loss Statement for review.

#### **MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Attending: Nancy McArthur, Elizabeth Derr, Larry Shipp, John Sampson, Debby Rice

Excused: Fritz Sabbow

The meeting opened with a review of the comparative income statements for the four months ending April 30, 2022. Overall, the church's operating performance was consistent with the same period of 2021; highlights of this discussion included:

- Combined pledge and plate giving was flat year over year excepting the \$15,000 gift to support the church's technology program and its importance in the church's mission.
- Market turbulence has reduced the endowment from \$1,718K to \$1,440K or \$278K (-16%). Should values fail to rebound, we will have a significantly reduced withdrawal from the endowment next year.
- Some expense accounting requires adjustment between line items.

Debby Rice discussed Stewardship which she will spearhead over the coming year. The church has purchased software called Little Green Light which will enable much stronger pledge accounting and donor communication. The group applauded this strengthened stewardship messaging both to the Council and to the church stakeholder community.

Three projects required additional discussion:

- Solar panels are no longer planned for the church, and the amounts currently reserved for this purpose will be moved from the Reserve for Repairs to a Reserve for Energy Efficiency so that we may ensure the proper use of the funds in the future. All donors have been contacted to verify their agreement to the church's use of the funds to reduce the church's energy consumption with alternative measures.

The Reserve for Replacements will total approximately \$19M once this reallocation occurs. Dan Mason has agreed to seek a refund of the \$1.7K down payment for the panels from ADK Solar.

- The Organ Fund totals \$14K and the committee noted that a congregational survey will be completed soon to determine the future use of these funds. Decisioning this project has been advocated by Chris Blaicher and other congregation members.
- Debby Rice is heading the Manse Discernment group and indicated that the group has determined that after cleaning and some refurbishment, the manse apartment will be leased through a real estate agent. This arrangement will ensure that the transaction is viewed as an objective economic transaction in the community once our current tenant vacates in July.
  - Rice also indicated that Finance will need to partner with the Manse group to ensure that the rent is appropriate. Nancy has contacted Martha Lee Owen regarding this need.
  - McArthur noted that an MAI appraisal of the property totaled \$400,000 including the house, garage and underlying land (exclude corner lot).

**Stewardship:** Debby Rice is taking over Stewardship from Larry Shipps. The Finance Committee purchased a donor software package (little green light) for Debby to learn and use. Stewardship is part of the Finance Committee, not a separate group. Progress will be reported through that group.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **GROUNDS REPORT**

On Sunday, May 1, 2022 there was a celebration of Arbor Day. The congregation gathered around the three Nannyberry Viburnum bushes that had been planted along the back pathway.

Planting in the pollinator garden will begin during the first week in June. We are in need of flat stepping stones to place in that garden and have asked for donations of these stones.

A Grounds work day is scheduled for Wednesday, May 25, 2022.

The crucifix is being renovated and is half way done.

### **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Worship has not met since our last Council meeting. They are expected to meet in early June.

### **MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE**

No new information was provided to the Council at this time.

### **CREATION JUSTICE REPORT**

On April 27, 2022 John, Katharine, Preston and Pam Gothner met to discuss moving forward with Creation Justice initiatives.

The following is a list of actions steps that will be taken:

The bottom slat on the sign in the front of the church will be redesigned to include "Creation Justice" and the logo.

The pollinator garden, a Creation Justice initiative, will be largely completed by the end of June.

The church will begin to use Casella for recycling and garbage in June. New trash and recycling bins have been purchased.

The coffee hour instructions will be updated to include information about composting the coffee grounds.

As we run out of consumable products in the office and sanctuary ( paper towels, tissues, hand soap, etc.) we will replace them with green products. A list is being compiled.

We will work to have a presence on the church's new website.

We will have a table at the Church Bazaar with a poster highlighting what has been done and what will be done.

Notes about Creation Justice issues will continue to appear weekly in the newsletter.

Commercially compostable dishes and takeout containers will be used at the dinner to benefit the Ukraine and will be taken to Blue Line Composting.

We will continue to work with the Green Team at KCS.

Curt Stager will preach at the church again in the fall.

KVCC has now hosted two successful disaster hygiene kit assembly workshops, thanks to Barbara Merle-Smith's stellar leadership. What was especially noteworthy about these events was the degree to which they engaged members of the wider community.

Katharine Preston, Pastor John, and I have been working on what we hope will be an interesting and thoughtful presentation Earth Day presentation on Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. Katharine has been communicating with Mary Warner at Keene Central School about engaging with the Keene Green Team, but Covid interfered with that effort.

Pastor John will speak at John Brown Day on May 14<sup>th</sup>. KVCC will again be a sponsor of Pride Day on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

Little Peaks, one of our grant recipients, is closing on its purchase of property in Keene and will soon start construction of a much-needed full-day childcare center for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. This will be a game-changer for families in our communities.

Henri Jordan

### **FLOWER COMMITTEE**

We are now into the warm season of garden and meadow flowers. Selection of plants and materials from nature are readily available. Reuse of previous flowers was the background for the May 15th church service. That focus will also continue.

We are a small group of four. Susie Doolittle of our group is still away. So we fill in the empty schedule spaces within our group, only asking for volunteers as needed.

Volunteers are in high demand in many groups. We also would welcome volunteers for a Sunday or a month of Sundays, whatever time you prefer. Particular Sundays can be used for memorials for family and friends. There is a flower chart on which you sign your name to reserve your special date near the kitchen. Please contact any member of our group with specific questions. We are happy to assist you if you are not familiar with these procedures. Your help in any way would be greatly appreciated.

## **RE-OPENING TASK FORCE REPORT**

- Group continues to monitor updates to health guidance, and the state of the pandemic.

## **SABBATICAL COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE COUNCIL**

This committee has met once since the last Council meeting.

In June we plan to publish through Community News a lineup of our Worship Leaders for the Sabbatical time. This will hopefully get people excited and curious about our offerings rather than say, "Well John won't be here so we won't bother going to church".

On the Sunday before our Annual meeting, which looks forward, we are planning a "Remembrance" service where people will be reminded of those who came before us and are memorialized in the garden behind the church.

Respectfully submitted, Elizabeth, Linda, Karen, Debby, Naj and Barbara

## **ORGAN**

Pastor John is sending out a reminder to the congregation to respond to the questions from the music/ organ group (Rob Hastings, Fritz Sabbow, Chris Blaicher, and Anne Hurd. Council is encouraged to respond as well.

## **The Manse Discernment Group met on April 19.**

Short Term: Are we going to rent the apartment in the near term while we discern what to do long term?

Group decided YES. (unanimous)

Prior to renting: deep clean and paint, small repairs as needed using volunteers led by Derek.

Application—we will use the services of a local realtor

Lease—formal lease will be used, including a security deposit

Proposed rent: using a local realtor at Fair Market Value + Utilities

Long Term:

No long-term option has been selected. We are just beginning this part of the discernment process.

We are beginning to gather some data. Nancy McArthur engaged an appraiser (group plans to review his document during the next meeting).

Members of the group brainstormed some ideas. “How can we make a difference in the neighborhood/community if we were to fully use our assets?”

### **Lazarus Letter**

The Council discussed the significance of Lazarus Blacksmith letter which was posted on Next Door Keene. We discussed how to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We spoke about how schools, churches, and the greater community can begin to address and respond to issues of race and culture. We discussed how our church can be plugged in more to different meetings within the community, such as school board meetings or town meetings, so we are more connected, more informed and more aware. Various members of the Council have experience in dealing with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Pastor John is also a member of the Steering Committee of Keene Diversity Advisory Committee (KDAC). He asked the Council to prepare questions to pose to the school, and Pastor John will send Bob and Dan (Keene Central School staff) an email inviting them to an upcoming Council meeting to respond to those questions.

### **Other Business:**

No other business.

Next council meeting is Tuesday, **June 28, 2022** (fourth Tuesday of the month) at 5:00 PM in person at the Keene Valley Library.

Deborah made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Mitchell, Clerk